

ESSAY
ON THE
Genius and Writings
OF
SHAKESPEAR:
WITH
Some Letters of Criticism to
the SPECTATOR.

By Mr. DENNIS.

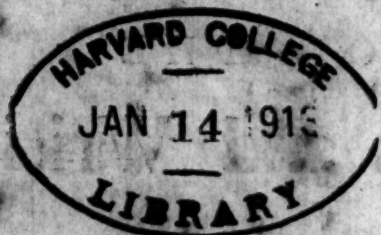
— *Me Lectori credere malim*
Quam Spectatoris fastidia ferre superbi. Horace.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
GEORGE GRANVILLE, Esq;
Secretary at War.

S I R,

AN Address of this Nature made
upon your Advancement to
one of the principal Employ-
ments of the State, and made by
one who has had the Honour to be
known to you so many Years, might
be pretended by malicious People to be a
Homage rather to your Fortune and Pow-
er, than a due Respect to your Merit and
Vertue; if it were not publickly known,
that I formerly applied my self to you
in the same manner, when you were

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Epistle Dedicatory.

much more distinguished by Merit and Vertue, than by Fortune and Power.

But if any one farther maliciously urges, that, even when I formerly applied my self to you, by the distinguishing Qualities of your Mind and Person, I foresaw your Fortune and Power; to him I answer, in order to vindicate the Reputation of my Sincerity and my Disinterestedness, that tho' I saw very well that those great Qualities fitted Mr. Granville for the most Illustrious Employments; yet who could have ever imagin'd that any Man living had Merit enough to raise him in spite of so many unfortunate Vertues with which that Merit was attended, in spite of not only a true Poetical Genius, but a Frankness, a Probity, a matchless Integrity, a Sincerity worthy of Heroick Times, and a most untainted Honour.

*But tho' your Character were less conspicuous, and what I had formerly done were intirely forgot, the numerous and
powerful*

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powerful Obligations I have to you, would more than justifie this Address; and the omitting the first Opportunity of making you a publick Acknowledgment would look like black Ingratitude. You have taken such Care of my Interest with others at a most seasonable Conjunction, and have your self made me a Present so noble, and so extraordinary at a time when I stood most in need of it, that how few alive have Spirit and Magnanimity to do any thing like it? At least I desire any one to name that living Man, who in a private Capacity has done any thing like it.

I know very well indeed that you are very far from desiring such a publick Acknowledgment, that you aim at nothing by doing daily good, but the God-like Pleasure which results from your Actions; and that others perhaps may censure me for sacrificing your Modesty to my own Vanity. For to publish to the World that I have been oblig'd in

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an extraordinary manner by a Person so universally esteem'd and distinguish'd, that one of the very few Things in which the most violent of both Parties agree, is the Character of Mr. Granville, will be thought to be the Result of uncommon Vanity, by those who have not Goodness enough to believe it to be the Effect of a lively Gratitude.

But tho', Sir, I had no Obligation to you, and you had no other Merit but that of perfectly understanding an Art which you have perfectly practis'd, viz. the Art which is the Subject of the following Treatise, that Treatise would be by Right of Nature yours. For to whom can an Essay upon the Genius and Writings of Shakespear be so properly address'd, as to him who best understands Shakespear, and who has most improv'd him. I would not give this just Encomium to the Jew of Venice, if I were not convinc'd from a long Experience of the Penetration and Force of
your

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your Judgment, ~~that~~ no Exaltation can make you a ~~mind~~ of your former noble Art; that you know it to be a Weakness barely to imagine, that the most noble and most exalted of all Arts, and the most difficult to excel in, can render a Man less qualified for publick Business, or for the first Employments of the State; that all the great Statesmen who have best succeeded in Affairs of Government, have either writ Poems or Treatises concerning Poetry. The most ancient of Historians and Legislators, Moses, at least of those whose Laws and Histories remain, has given us a pathetick and a lofty Poem upon the Passage of the Red Sea.

The Athenian Legislator Solon thought it not in the least below his Dignity to render Moral Vertue lovely by the Charms of Verse. And Lacedemonian Licurgus, even the rigid and the austere Lycurgus, thought it an Employment worthy of his Wisdom and Vertue, to re-

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store and publish the Immortal Works of Homer: Having the same Opinion of that Prince of Poets that Horace afterwards had; that his Poems would better instruct Mankind in Vertue than they could be possibly taught by Prose. The most Illustrious Writers of Politicks among the Grecians, Plato and Aristotle; one of them had a figurative, a lofty and a Poetick Prose; and the other, who may be call'd the Legislator of Parnassus, wrote the Laws of Tragedy so exactly and so truly in Reason and Nature, that succeeding Criticks have writ justly and reasonably upon that Art no farther than they have adhered to their great Master's Notions. Tacitus the very Oracle of Modern Statesmen has a Stile that is warm and daring, and figurative, that is to say Poetick. Machiavel the Prince of Modern Politicians, if we except but one of our own Countrymen, wrote more than one Comedy, and more than one Poem has been attempted by
our

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our British Politician Harrington. The two Princes of Poets may easily be proved to've been great Statesmen; Homer particularly made choice of a Moral, which in his Time, when Greece with the Islands of the Ægean was divided into petty Sovereignties, was the fundamental Maxim of their Politicks and their true Interest; which Moral was, as Salust afterwards express'd it, *Concordiâ res parvæ crescunt, Discordiâ maxima dilabuntur*; from whose noblest Poem you formerly gave us a Tragedy, in which in Imitation of Homer, you are daring yet just, fiery yet regular, sublime yet natural and perspicuous, chaste yet alluring, and easie yet strong and powerful.

But to come to the more active part of Government, the greatest Monarchs and Captains, and Ministers of State that ever were known in the World, either were or would have been great Poets. When Athens flourish'd in all her Glory, their Poets and their famous Writers
were

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were they who directed their Counsels,
and led their Armies to Battel. Alexander read nothing but the Works of Homer while he conquer'd the Orient. In Rome the greatest Captain that flourish'd in the Time of the Commonwealth vouchsafed his Assistance to a Comick Poet: And the two first Cæsars were proud to write Tragedies with those fatal Hands that were victorious over the Universe. Mecænas, at the Time that he was first Minister to the Emperor of the World, was not only the greatest Patron of the Muses that ever was, but endeavour'd to be himself a Poet. If we descend to Modern Times, Richlieu, who laid the Foundation of the French Greatness, wrote more than one Dramatick Poem, with that very right Hand which dictated to the Cabinets of so many Sovereign Princes, and directed the successful Motions of so many conquering Commanders. And that Greatness, which upon a French Poetick Foundation was in the Space of less than
than

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than one Century rais'd to an insupportable Height, was in less than twenty Years sapp'd and undermin'd, and overturn'd by a British Poetick Ministry : It being undeniable, that several of the Persons who made the chief Figures in both the old and the new Ministry were Poets. I make no doubt, Sir, but the Time will come when you will be distinguish'd by the Wisdom and Reach of your Counsels; as much as you were formerly by the Spirit and Justness of your Writings. For the very Vertues which we once were afraid would hinder your Advancement even in the most vertuous Court, are now like to preserve and support your Interest since you have had an Opportunity of publickly practising them so long. 'Tis impossible to behold that Ardor, that Sincerity and that Alacrity, with which you every Day endeavour to do good to your Fellow-Creatures, without loving you, and without wishing, as well as hoping, that you may be the peculiar Care of Providence,

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dence, which by advancing you to one of the most eminent Stations would provide for Thousands. But when we behold that Ardor and that Alacrity, attended with such an attractive Sweetness and such a manly Grace, and with a Nobility which God and Nature seem to have imprinted both on your Mind and Person, we have no longer Power over our selves, but give up all our Affections to you; and not only wish, but firmly believe that since God and Nature have given you those several Excellencies which were the undoubted Original of all Political Nobility, they have determin'd you to succeed to the most extensive Fortunes and Titles of your Noble Ancestors; which is warmly desir'd and earnestly expected by all who have the Honour to know you, but more especially by

S I R,

Your most oblig'd, most humble,
and most faithful Servant,

JOHN DENNIS.

LET-



LETTER. I.

On the Genius and Writings of Shakespear.

To Mr. ———

S I R,

Feb. 1. 1711.

I Here send you the Tragedy of *Coriolanus*, which I have alter'd from the Original of *Shakespear*, and with it a short Account of the Genius and Writings of that Author, both which you desired me to send to you the last time I had the good Fortune to see you. But I send them both upon this condition, that you will with your usual Sincerity tell me your Sentiments both of the Poem and of the Criticism.

Shakespear was one of the greatest Genius's that the World e'er saw for the Tragick Stage. Tho' he lay under greater Dis-

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advantages

advantages than any of his Successors, yet had he greater and more genuine Beauties than the best and greatest of them. And what makes the brightest Glory of his Character, those Beauties were entirely his own, and owing to the Force of his own Nature; whereas his Faults were owing to his Education, and to the Age that he liv'd in. One may say of him as they did of *Homer*, that he had none to imitate, and is himself inimitable. His Imaginations were often as just, as they were bold and strong. He had a natural Discretion which never cou'd have been taught him, and his Judgment was strong and penetrating. He seems to have wanted nothing but Time and Leisure for Thought, to have found out those Rules of which he appears so ignorant. His Characters are always drawn justly, exactly, graphically, except where he fail'd by not knowing History or the Poetical Art. He has for the most part more fairly distinguish'd them than any of his Successors have done, who have falsified them, or confounded them, by making Love the predominant Quality in all. He had so fine a Talent for touching the Passions, and they are so lively in him, and so truly in Nature, that they often touch us more without their due Preparations, than those of other Tragick Poets, who have all the Beauty of Design and all the Advantage of Incidents.

Incidents. His Master-Passion was Terror, which he has often mov'd so powerfully and so wonderfully, that we may justly conclude, that if he had had the Advantage of Art and Learning, he wou'd have surpass'd the very best and strongest of the Ancients. His Paintings are often so beautiful and so lively, so graceful and so powerful, especially where he uses them in order to move Terror; that there is nothing perhaps more accomplish'd in our *English* Poetry. His Sentiments for the most part in his best Tragedies, are noble, generous, easie and natural, and adapted to the Persons who use them. His Expression is in many Places good and pure after a hundred Years; simple tho' elevated, graceful tho' bold, and easy tho' strong. He seems to have been the very Original of our *English* Tragical Harmony; that is the Harmony of Blank Verse, diversifyed often by Dissyllable and Trissyllable Terminations. For that Diversity distinguishes it from Heroick Harmony, and bringing it nearer to common Use, makes it more proper to gain Attention, and more fit for Action and Dialogue. Such Verse we make when we are writing Prose; we make such Verse in common Conversation.

If *Shakespear* had these great Qualities by Nature, what would he not have been, if he had join'd to so happy a Genius Learning

and the Poetical Art. For want of the latter our Author has sometimes made gross Mistakes in the Characters which he has drawn from History, against the Equality and Conveniency of Manners of his Dramatical Persons. Witness *Menenius* in the following Tragedy, whom he has made an errant Buffoon, which is a great Absurdity. For he might as well have imagin'd a grave majestick *Jack-Pudding*, as a Buffoon in a Roman Senator. *Aufidius* the General of the *Volscians* is shewn a base and a profligate Villain. He has offended against the Equality of the Manners even in his Hero himself. For *Coriolanus* who in the first part of the Tragedy is shewn so open, so frank, so violent, and so magnanimous, is represented in the latter part by *Aufidius* which is contradicted by no one, a flattering, fawning, cringing, insinuating Traytor.

For want of this Poetical Art, *Shakespear* has introduced things into his Tragedies, which are against the Dignity of that noble Poem, as the Rabble in *Julius Caesar*, and that in *Coriolanus*; tho' that in *Coriolanus* offends not only against the Dignity of Tragedy, but against the Truth of History likewise, and the Customs of Ancient Rome, and the Majesty of the Roman People, as we shall have occasion to shew anon.

For

For want of this Art, he has made his Incidents less moving, less surprizing, and less wonderful. He has been so far from seeking those fine Occasions to move with which an Action furnish'd according to Art would have furnish'd him; that he seems rather to have industriously avoided them. He makes *Coriolanus* upon his Sentence of Banishment, take his leave of his Wife and his Mother out of sight of the Audience, and so has purposely as it were avoided a great occasion to move.

If we are willing to allow, that *Shakespeare* by sticking to the bare Events of History, has mov'd more than any of his Successors, yet his just Admirers must confess, that if he had had the Poetical Art, he would have mov'd ten times more. For 'tis impossible that by a bare Historical Play he could move so much as he would have done by a Fable.

We find that a Romance entertains the generality of Mankind with more Satisfaction than History, if they read only to be entertain'd; but if they read History thro' Pride or Ambition, they bring their Passions along with them, and that alters the case. Nothing is more plain than that even in an Historical Relation some Parts of it, and some Events, please more than others. And therefore a Man of Judgment, who sees why they

do so, may in forming a Fable, and disposing an Action, please more than an Historian can do. For the just Fiction of a Fable moves us more than an Historical Relation can do for the two following Reasons: First by reason of the Communication and mutual Dependence of its Parts. For if Passion springs from Motion, then the Obstruction of that Motion or a counter Motion must obstruct and check the Passion: And therefore an Historian and a Writer of Historical Plays passing from Events of one nature to Events of another nature without a due Preparation, must of necessity stifle and confound one Passion by another. The second Reason why the Fiction of a Fable pleases us more, than an Historical Relation can do, is, because in an Historical Relation we seldom are acquainted with the true Causes of Events, whereas in a feign'd Action which is duly constituted, that is, which has a just beginning, those Causes always appear. For 'tis observable, that both in a Poetical Fiction and an Historical Relation, those Events are the most entertaining, the most surprising, and the most wonderful, in which Providence most plainly appears. And 'tis for this Reason that the Author of a just Fable, must please more than the Writer of an Historical Relation. The Good must never fail to prosper, and the Bad must be always

ways punish'd : Otherwise the Incidents, and particularly the Catastrophe which is the grand Incident, are liable to be imputed rather to Chance, than to Almighty Conduct and to Sovereign Justice. The want of this impartial Distribution of Justice makes the *Coriolanus* of *Shakespear* to be without Moral. 'Tis true indeed *Coriolanus* is kill'd by those Foreign Enemies with whom he had openly sided against his Country, which seems to be an Event worthy of Providence, and would look as if it were contriv'd by infinite Wisdom, and executed by supreme Justice, to make *Coriolanus* a dreadful Example to all, who lead on Foreign Enemies to the Invasion of their native Country ; if there were not something in the Fate of the other Characters, which gives occasion to doubt of it, and which suggests to the Sceptical Reader that this might happen by accident. For *Aufidius* the principal Murderer of *Coriolanus*, who in cold Blood gets him assassinated by *Ruffians*, instead of leaving him to the Law of the Country, and the Justice of the *Volscian* Senate, and who commits so black a Crime, not by any erroneous Zeal, or a mistaken Publick Spirit, but thro' Jealousy, Envy, and inveterate Malice ; this Assassinator not only survives, and survives unpunish'd, but seems to be rewarded for so detestable an Action ; by engrossing all those

Honours to himself which *Coriolanus* before had shar'd with him. But not only *Aufidius*, but the *Roman* Tribunes, *Sicinius* and *Brutus*, appear to me to cry aloud for Poetick Vengeance. For they are guilty of two Faults, neither of which ought to go unpunish'd: The first in procuring the Banishment of *Coriolanus*. If they were really jealous, that *Coriolanus* had a Design on their Liberties, when he stood for the Consulship, it was but just that they should give him a Repulse; but to get the Champion and Defender of their Country banish'd upon a pretended Jealousy was a great deal too much, and could proceed from nothing but that Hatred and Malice which they had conceiv'd against him, for opposing their Institution. Their second Fault lay in procuring this Sentence by indirect Methods, by exasperating and inflaming the People by Artifices and Insinuations, by taking a base Advantage of the Open-heartedness and Violence of *Coriolanus*, and by oppressing him with a Sophistical Argument, that he aim'd at Sovereignty, because he had not deliver'd into the Publick Treasury the Spoils which he had taken from the *Antiates*. As if a Design of Sovereignty could be reasonably concluded from any one Act; or any one could think of bringing to pass such a Design, by eternally favouring the Patricians, and disoblighing

ging the Populace. For we need make no doubt, but that it was among the young Patricians, that *Coriolanus* distributed the Spoils which were taken from the *Antiates*; whereas nothing but caressing the Populace could enslave the *Roman* People, as *Cæsar* afterwards very well saw and experienc'd. So that this Injustice of the Tribunes was the original Cause of the Calamity which afterwards befel their Country, by the Invasion of the *Volsicians*, under the Conduct of *Coriolanus*. And yet these Tribunes at the end of the Play like *Aufidius* remain unpunish'd. But indeed *Shakespeare* has been wanting in the exact Distribution of Poetical Justice not only in his *Coriolanus*, but in most of his best Tragedies, in which the Guilty and the Innocent perish promiscuously; as *Duncan* and *Banquo* in *Mackbeth*, as likewise *Lady Macduffe* and her Children; *Desdemona* in *Othello*; *Cordelia*, *Kent*, and *King Lear*, in the Tragedy that bears his Name; *Brutus* and *Porcia* in *Julius Cæsar*, and young *Hamlet* in the Tragedy of *Hamlet*. For tho' it may be said in Defence of the last, that *Hamlet* had a Design to kill his Uncle who then reign'd; yet this is justify'd by no less than a Call from Heaven, and raising up one from the Dead to urge him to it. The Good and the Bad then perishing promiscuously in the best of *Shakespeare's* Tragedies, there can be either

ther none or very weak Instruction in them : For such promiscuous Events call the Government of Providence into Question, and by Scepticks and Libertines are resolv'd into Chance. I humbly conceive therefore that this want of Dramatical Justice in the Tragedy of *Coriolanus*, gave occasion for a just Alteration, and that I was oblig'd to sacrifice to that Justice *Aufidius* and the Tribunes, as well as *Coriolanus*.

Thus have we endeavour'd to shew, that for want of the Poetical Art, *Shakespear* lay under very great Disadvantages. At the same time we must own to his Honour, that he has often perform'd Wonders without it, in spite of the Judgment of so great a Man as *Horace*.

*Natura fieret Laudabile carmen an arte
Quæsitum est; ego nec studium sine Divite vena?
Nec rude quid profit video Ingenium, alterius sic
Altera poscit opem res, & conjurat amicè.*

But from this very Judgment of *Horace* we may justly conclude, that *Shakespear* would have wonderfully surpass'd himself, if Art had been join'd to Nature. There never was a greater Genius in the World than *Virgil* : He was one who seems to have been born for this glorious End, that the *Roman* Muse might exert in him the utmost Force of her Poetry :

Poetry : And his admirable and divine Beauties are manifestly owing to the happy Confederacy of Art and Nature. It was Art that contriv'd that incomparable Design of the *Aeneis*, and it was Nature that executed it. Could the greatest Genius that ever was infus'd into Earthly Mold by Heaven, if it had been unguided and unassisted by Art, have taught him to make that noble and wonderful Use of the *Pythagorean* Transmigration, which he makes in the Sixth Book of his Poem? Had *Virgil* been a circular Poet, and closely adher'd to History, how could the *Romans* have been transported with that inimitable Episode of *Dido*, which brought a-fresh into their Minds the *Carthaginian* War, and the dreadful *Hannibal*? When 'tis evident that that admirable Episode is so little owing to a faithful observance of History, and the exact order of Time, that 'tis deriv'd from a very bold but judicious Violation of these; it being undeniable that *Dido* liv'd almost 300 Years after *Aeneas*. Yet is it that charming Episode that makes the chief Beauties of a third Part of the Poem. For the Destruction of *Troy* it self which is so divinely related, is still more admirable by the Effect it produces, which is the Passion of *Dido*.

I should now proceed to shew under what Disadvantages *Shakespear* lay for want of
being

being conversant with the Ancients. But I have already writ a long Letter, and am desirous to know how you relish what has been already said before I go any farther: For I am unwilling to take more Pains before I am sure of giving you some Pleasure. I am,

S I R,

Your most Humble,

Faithful Servant.

LETTER

LETTER II.

On the Genius and Writings of Shakespear.

To Mr. ———

SIR, *Feb. 6. 1712.*

UPON the Encouragement I have receiv'd from you, I shall proceed to shew under what Disadvantages *Shakespear* lay for want of being conversant with the Ancients. But because I have lately been in some Conversation, where they would not allow, but that he was acquainted with the Ancients, I shall endeavour to make it appear that he was not; and the shewing that in the Method in which I pretend to convince the Reader of it, will sufficiently prove, what Inconveniences he lay under, and what Errors he committed for want of being conversant with them. But here we must distinguish between the several kinds of Acquaintance: A Man may be said to be acquainted with another who never was but twice in his Company; but that is at the best a superficial Acquaintance, from which neither very great Pleasure nor Profit can be deriv'd. Our business is here to shew,

shew, that *Shakespear* had no familiar Acquaintance with the *Gracian* and *Roman* Authors. For if he was familiarly conversant with them, how comes it to pass that he wants Art? Is it that he studied to know them in other things; and neglected that only in them, which chiefly tends to the Advancement of the Art of the Stage? Or is it that he wanted Discernment, to see the Justness and the Greatness, and the Harmony of their Designs, and the Reasonableness of those Rules upon which those Designs are founded? Or how come his Successors to have that Discernment which he wanted, when they fall so much below him in other things? How comes he to have been guilty of the grossest faults in Chronology, and how come we to find out those faults? In his Tragedy of *Troilus and Cressida*, he introduces *Hector* speaking of *Aristotle*, who was born a thousand Years after the Death of *Hector*. In the same Play mention is made of *Milo*, which is another very great fault in Chronology. *Alexander* is mention'd in *Coriolanus*, tho' that Conqueror of the Orient liv'd above Two hundred Years after him. In this last Tragedy he has mistaken the very Names of his Dramatick Persons, if we give Credit to *Livy*. For the Mother of *Coriolanus* in the *Roman* Historian is *Veturia*, and the Wife is *Volumnia*. Whereas in
Shakespear

Shakespear the Wife is *Virgilia*, and the Mother *Volumnia*. And the *Volscian* General in *Shakespear* is *Tullus Aufidius*, and *Tullus Attius* in *Livy*. How comes it that he takes *Plutarch's* Word, who was by Birth a *Grecian* for the Affairs of *Rome*, rather than that of the *Roman* Historian, if so be that he had read the Latter? Or what Reason can be given for his not reading him, when he wrote upon a *Roman* Story, but that in *Shakespear's* Time there was a Translation of *Plutarch*, and there was none of *Livy*? If *Shakespear* was familiarly conversant with the *Roman* Authors, how came he to introduce a Rabble into *Coriolanus*, in which he offended not only against the Dignity of Tragedy, but the Truth of Fact, the Authority of all the *Roman* Writers, the Customs of Ancient *Rome*, and the Majesty of the *Roman* People? By introducing a Rabble into *Julius Caesar*, he only offended against the Dignity of Tragedy. For that part of the People who ran about the Streets upon great Festivals, or publick Calamities, or publick Rejoicings, or Revolutions in Government, are certainly the Scum of the Populace. But the Persons who in the Time of *Coriolanus*, rose in Vindication of their just Rights, and extorted from the Patricians the Institution of the Tribunes of the People, and the Persons by whom afterwards *Coriolanus* was tried,

tried, were the whole Body of the *Roman* People to the Reserve of the Patricians, which Body included the *Roman* Knights, and the wealthy substantial Citizens, who were as different from the Rabble as the Patricians themselves, as qualify'd as the latter to form a right Judgment of Things, and to condemn the vain Opinions of the Rabble. So at least *Horace* esteems them, who very well knew his Countrymen.

*Offenduntur enim, quibus est equus, aut pater,
aut res,
Nec siquid frieti ciceris probat aut nucis emptor,
Equis accipiant animis donantve Corona?*

Where we see the Knights and the substantial Citizens, are rank'd in an equal Degree of Capacity with the *Roman* Senators, and are equally distinguish'd from the Rabble.

If *Shakespear* was so conversant with the Ancients, how comes he to have introduc'd some Characters into his Plays, so unlike what they are to be found in History? In the Character of *Menenius* in the following Tragedy, he has doubly offended against that Historical Resemblance. For first whereas *Menenius* was an eloquent Person, *Shakespear* has made him a downright Buffoon. And how is it possible for any Man to conceive a *Ciceronian* Jack-pudding? Never was
any

any Buffoon eloquent, or wise, or witty, or vertuous. All the good and ill Qualities of a Buffoon are summ'd up in one word, and that is a Buffoon. And secondly, whereas *Shakespear* has made him a Hater and Contemner, and Vilifyer of the People, we are assur'd by the *Roman* Historian that *Menenius* was extremely popular. He was so very far from opposing the Institution of the Tribunes, as he is represented in *Shakespear*, that he was chiefly instrumental in it. After the People had deserted the City, and sat down upon the sacred Mountain, he was the chief of the Delegates whom the Senate deputed to them, as being look'd upon to be the Person who would be most agreeable to them. In short this very *Menenius* both liv'd and dy'd so very much their Favourite, that dying poor he had pompous Funerals at the Expence of the *Roman* People.

Had *Shakespear* read either *Salust* or *Cicero*, how could he have made so very little of the first and greatest of Men, as that *Cæsar* should be but a Fourth-rate Actor in his own Tragedy? How could it have been that seeing *Cæsar*, we should ask for *Cæsar*? That we should ask, where is his unequal'd Greatness of Mind, his unbounded Thirst of Glory, and that victorious Eloquence, with which he triumph'd over the Souls

of both Friends and Enemies, and with which he rivall'd *Cicero* in Genius as he did *Pompey* in Power? How fair an Occasion was there to open the Character of *Cæsar* in the first Scene between *Brutus* and *Cassius*? For when *Cassius* tells *Brutus* that *Cæsar* was but a Man like them, and had the same natural Imperfections which they had, how natural had it been for *Brutus* to reply, that *Cæsar* indeed had their Imperfections of Nature, but neither he nor *Cassius* had by any means the great Qualities of *Cæsar*: Neither his Military Vertue nor Science, nor his matchless Renown, nor his unparallell'd Victories, his unwearied Bounty to his Friends, nor his Godlike Clemency to his Foes, his Beneficence, his Munificence, his easiness of Access to the meanest *Roman*, his indefatigable Labours, his incredible Celerity, the Plausibleness if not Justness of his Ambition, that knowing himself to be the greatest of Men, he only sought occasion to make the World confess him such. In short, if *Brutus*, after enumerating all the wonderful Qualities of *Cæsar*, had resolv'd in spite of them all to sacrifice him to publick Liberty, how had such a Proceeding heighten'd the Vertue and the Character of *Brutus*? But then indeed it would have been requisite that *Cæsar* upon his appearance should have made
all

all this good. And as we know no Principle of human Action but human Sentiment only, *Cæsar* who did greater Things, and had greater Designs than the rest of the *Romans*, ought certainly to have outshin'd by many Degrees all the other Characters of his Tragedy. *Cæsar* ought particularly to have justified his Actions, and to have heighten'd his Character, by shewing that what he had done, he had done by Necessity; that the *Romans* had lost their *Agrarian*, lost their Rotation of Magistracy, and that consequently nothing but an empty Shadow of publick Liberty remain'd. That the *Gracchi* had made the last noble but unsuccessful Efforts, for the restoring the Commonwealth, that they had fail'd for want of arbitrary irresistible Power, the Restoration of the *Agrarian* requiring too vast a Retrospect to be done without it; that the Government, when *Cæsar* came to publick Affairs, was got into the Hands of a few, and that those few were factious, and were contending among themselves, and if you will pardon so mean an Expression, scrambling as it were for Power; That *Cæsar* was reduc'd to the Necessity of ruling or himself obeying a Master; and that apprehending that another would exercise the supreme Command, without that Clemency and Moderation which he did, he had rather cho-

fen to rule than to obey. So that *Cæſar* was faulty not ſo much in ſeizing upon the Sovereignty, which was become in a manner neceſſary, as in not re-eſta bliſhing the Commonwealth, by reſtoring the *Agrarian* and the Rotation of Magiſtracies, after he had got abſolute and uncontroulable Power. And if *Cæſar* had ſeiz'd upon the Sovereignty only with a View of re-eſta bliſhing Liberty, he had ſurpaſs'd all Mortals in Godlike Goodneſs as much as he did in the reſt of his aſtoniſhing Qualities. I muſt confeſs, I do not remember that we have any Authority from the *Roman* Hiſtorians which may induce us to believe, that *Cæſar* had any ſuch Deſign. Nor if he had had any ſuch View, could he, who was the moſt ſecret, the moſt prudent, and the moſt diſcerning of Men, have diſcover'd it, before his *Parthian* Expedition was over, for fear of utterly diſobliging his Veterans. And *Cæſar* believ'd that Expedition neceſſary for the Honour and Intereſt of the State, and for his own Glory.

But of this we may be ſure that two of the moſt diſcerning of all the *Romans*, and who had the deepeſt Inſight into the Soul of *Cæſar*, *Saluſt* and *Cicero*, were not without Hopes that *Cæſar* would really re-eſta bliſh Liberty, or elſe they would not have attack'd him upon it; the one in his Ora-
tion

tion for *Marcus Marcellus*, the other in the Second Part of that little Treatise *De Republicâ ordinandâ*, which is address'd to *Cæsar*. *Hæc igitur tibi reliqua pars*, says *Cicero*, *Hic restat Actus, in hoc elaborandum est, ut Rempublicam constituas, eâq; tu in primis composita, summa Tranquillitate & otio perfruare.* *Cicero* therefore was not without Hope that *Cæsar* would re-establish the Commonwealth; and any one who attentively peruses that Oration of *Cicero*, will find that that Hope was reasonably grounded, upon his knowledge of the great Qualities of *Cæsar*, his Clemency, his Beneficence, his admirable Discernment; and that avoidless Ruine in which the whole Empire would be soon involv'd, if *Cæsar* did not effect this. *Salust* urges it still more home to him and with greater vehemence; he has recourse to every Motive that may be thought to be powerful over so great a Soul. He exhorts him by the Memory of his matchless Conquests, not to suffer the invincible Empire of the *Roman* People to be devour'd by Time, or to be torn in pieces by Discord; one of which would soon and infallibly happen, if Liberty was not restor'd.

He introduces his Country and his Progenitors urging him in a noble Prosopopeia, by all the mighty Benefits which they had

conferr'd upon him, with so little Pains of his own, not to deny them that just and easy Request of the Restoration of Liberty. He adjures him by those Furies which will eternally haunt his Soul upon his impious Refusal: He implores him by the foresight of those dismal Calamities, that horrible Slaughter, those endless Wars, and that unbounded Devastation, which will certainly fall upon Mankind, if the Restoration of Liberty is prevented by his Death, or his incurable Sicknes: And lastly, he entreats him by his Thirst of immortal Glory, that Glory in which he now has Rivals, if he has not Equals; but which, if he re-establishes Liberty, will be acknowledg'd by consenting Nations to have neither Equal nor Second.

I am apt to believe that if *Shakespear* had been acquainted with all this, we had had from him quite another Character of *Cesar* than that which we now find in him. He might then have given us a Scene something like that which *Corneille* has so happily us'd in his *Cinna*; something like that which really happen'd between *Augustus*, *Mecenas* and *Agrippa*. He might then have introduc'd *Cesar*, consulting *Cicero* on the one side, and on the other *Anthony*, whether he should retain that absolute Sovereignty, which he had acquir'd by his Victory, or whether

whether he should re-establish and immortalize Liberty. That would have been a Scene, which might have employ'd the finest Art and the utmost force of a Writer. That had been a Scene in which all the great Qualities of *Cæsar* might have been display'd. I will not pretend to determine here how that Scene might have been turn'd, and what I have already said on this Subject, has been spoke with the utmost Caution and Diffidence. But this I will venture to say, that if that Scene had been manag'd so, as, by the powerful Motives employ'd in it, to have shaken the Soul of *Cæsar*, and to have left room for the least Hope, for the least Doubt, that *Cæsar* would have re-establish'd Liberty, after his *Parthian* Expedition; and if this Conversation had been kept secret till the Death of *Cæsar*, and then had been discover'd by *Anthony*, then had *Cæsar* fall'n, so belov'd and lamented by the *Roman* People, so pitied and so bewail'd even by the Conspirators themselves, as never Man fell. Then there would have been a Catastrophe the most dreadful and the most deplorable that ever was beheld upon the Tragick Stage. Then had we seen the noblest of the Conspirators cursing their temerarious Act, and the most apprehensive of them, in dreadful expectation of those horrible Calamities, which fell up-

on the *Romans* after the Death of *Cæsar*. But, Sir, when I write this to you, I write it with the utmost Deference to the extraordinary Judgment of that great Man, who some Years ago, I hear, alter'd the *Julius Cæsar*. And I make no doubt but that his fine Discernment, and the rest of his great Qualities have amply supply'd the Defects which are found in the Character of *Shakespear's Cæsar*.

I should here answer an Argument, by which some People pretend to prove, and especially those with whom I lately convers'd, that *Shakespear* was conversant with the Ancients. But besides that the Post is about to be gone, I am heartily tir'd with what I have already writ, and so doubtless are you ; I shall therefore defer the rest to the next opportunity, and remain

Your, &c.

LETTER

LETTER III.

On the Writings and Genius of Shakespear.

To Mr. ———

SIR,

Feb. 8.

I Come now to the main Argument, which some People urge to prove that *Shakespear* was conversant with the Ancients. For there is, say they, among *Shakespear's* Plays, one call'd *The Comedy of Errors*, which is undeniably an Imitation of the *Menechmi* of *Plautus*. Now *Shakespear*, say they, being conversant with *Plautus*, it undeniably follows that he was acquainted with the Ancients; because no *Roman* Author could be hard to him who had conquer'd *Plautus*. To which I answer, that the Errors which we have mention'd above are to be accounted for no other way, but by the want of knowing the Ancients, or by downright want of Capacity. But nothing can be more absurd or more unjust than to impute it to want of Capacity. For the very Sentiments of *Shakespear* alone are sufficient to shew, that he had a great Understanding: And therefore we must account some other way

for his Imitation of the *Menechmi*. I remember to have seen among the Translations of *Ovid's* Epistles printed by Mr. *Tonson*; an Imitation of that from *Ænone* to *Paris*, which Mr. *Dryden* tells us in his Preface to those Epistles was imitated by one of the Fair Sex who understood no Latin, but that she had done enough to make those blush who understood it the best. There are at this day several Translators, who as *Hudibras* has it,

*Translate from Languages of which
They understand no part of Speech.*

I will not affirm that of *Shakespear*; I believe he was able to do what Pedants call construe, but that he was able to read *Plautus* without Pain and Difficulty I can never believe. Now I appeal to you, Sir, what time he had between his Writing and his Acting, to read any thing that could not be read with Ease and Pleasure. We see that our Adversaries themselves acknowledge, that if *Shakespear* was able to read *Plautus* with Ease, nothing in Latinity could be hard to him. How comes it to pass then, that he has given us no Proofs of his familiar Acquaintance with the Ancients, but this Imitation of the *Menechmi*, and a Version of two Epistles of *Ovid*? How comes it

it that he had never read *Horace* of a superior Merit to either, and particularly his Epistle to the *Piso's*, which so much concern'd his Art? Or if he had read that Epistle, how comes it that in his *Troilus* and *Cressida* [we must observe by the way, that when *Shakespear* wrote that Play, *Ben Jonson* had not as yet translated that Epistle] he runs counter to the Instructions which *Horace* has given for the forming the Character of *Achilles*?

*Scriptor: Honoratum si forte reponis Achillem,
Impiger, Iracundus, Inexorabilis, Acer,
Fura neget sibi nata.*

Where is the *Impiger*, the *Iracundus*, or the *Acer*, in the Character of *Shakespear's Achilles*? Who is nothing but a drolling, lazy, conceited, overlooking Coxcomb; so far from being the honour'd *Achilles*, the Epithet that *Homer*, and *Horace* after him give him, that he is deservedly the Scorn and the Jest of the rest of the Characters, even to that Buffoon *Thersites*.

Tho' *Shakespear* succeeded very well in Comedy, yet his principal Talent and his chief Delight was Tragedy. If then *Shakespear* was qualify'd to read *Plautus* with Ease, he could read with a great deal more Ease the Translations of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*.

ripides. And tho' by these Translations he would not have been able to have seen the charming colouring of those great Masters, yet would he have seen all the Harmony and the Beauty of their great and their just Designs. He would have seen enough to have stirr'd up a noble Emulation in so exalted a Soul as his. How comes it then that we hear nothing from him, of the *Œdipus*, the *Electra*, the *Antigone* of *Sophocles*, of the *Iphigenia's*, the *Orestes*, the *Medea*, the *Hecuba* of *Euripides*? How comes it that we see nothing in the Conduct of his Pieces, that shews us that he had the least Acquaintance with any of these great Master-pieces? Did *Shakespear* appear to be so nearly touch'd with the Affliction of *Hecuba* for the Death of *Priam*, which was but daub'd and bungled by one of his Countrymen, that he could not forbear introducing it as it were by Violence into his own *Hamlet*, and would he make no Imitation, no Commendation, not the least mention of the unparallell'd and inimitable Grief of the *Hecuba* of *Euripides*? How comes it, that we find no Imitation of any ancient Play in this but the *Menechmi* of *Plautus*? How came he to chuse a Comick preferably to the Tragick Poets? Or how comes he to chuse *Plautus* preferably to *Terence*, who is so much more just, more graceful, more regular,

regular, and more natural? Or how comes he to chuse the *Menechmi* of *Plautus*, which is by no means his Master-piece before all his other Comedies? I vehemently suspect that this Imitation of the *Menechmi*, was either from a printed Translation of that Comedy which is lost, or some Version in Manuscript brought him by a Friend, or sent him perhaps by a Stranger; or from the original Play it self recommended to him, and read to him by some learned Friend. In short, I had rather account for this, by what is not absurd than by what is, or by a less Absurdity than by a greater. For nothing can be more wrong than to conclude from this that *Shakespear* was conversant with the Ancients; which contradicts the Testimony of his Contemporary, and his familiar Acquaintance *Ben Johnson*, and of his Successor *Milton*;

*Lo Shakespear, Fancy's sweetest Child,
Warbles his native Wood-notes wild.*

And of Mr. *Dryden* after them both; and which destroys the most glorious Part of *Shakespear's* Merit immediately. For how can he be esteem'd equal by Nature, or superior to the Ancients, when he falls so far short of them in Art, tho' he had the Advantage of knowing all that they did before him?

him? Nay it debases him below those of common Capacity, by reason of the Errors which we mention'd above. Therefore he who allows that *Shakespear* had Learning and a familiar Acquaintance with the Ancients, ought to be look'd upon as a Detractor from his extraordinary Merit, and from the Glory of *Great Britain*. For whether is it more honourable for this Island to have produc'd a Man, who without having any Acquaintance with the Ancients, or any but a slender and a superficial one, appears to be their Equal or their Superiour by the Force of Genius and Nature, or to have bred one who knowing the Ancients, falls infinitely short of them in Art, and consequently in Nature it self? *Great Britain* has but little Reason to boast of its Natives Education, since the same that they had here, they might have had in another place. But it may justly claim a very great share in their Nature and Genius; since these depend in a great measure on the Climate; and therefore *Horace* in the Instruction which he gives for the forming the Characters, advises the noble *Romans* for whose Instruction he chiefly writes to consider whether the Dramatick Person whom they introduce is

Colchus

Colchus an Assyrius, Thebis nutritus an Argis.

Thus, Sir, I have endeavour'd to shew under what great Disadvantages *Shakespear* lay, for want of the Poetical Art, and for want of being conversant with the Ancients.

But besides this, he lay under other very great Inconveniencies. For he was neither Master of Time enough to consider, correct, and polish what he wrote, to alter it, to add to it, and to retrench from it, nor had he Friends to consult upon whose Capacity and Integrity he could depend. And tho' a Person of very good Judgment, may succeed very well without consulting his Friends, if he takes time enough to correct what he writes; yet even the greatest Man that Nature and Art can conspire to accomplish, can never attain to Perfection, without either employing a great deal of time, or taking the Advice of judicious Friends. Nay, 'tis the Opinion of *Horace*, that he ought to do both.

*Siquid tamen olim
Scripseris, in Metii descendat Judicis aures,
Et Patris, & nostras; nonumq; prematur in Annum.*

Now we know very well that *Shakespear* was an Actor, at a Time, when there were
seven

seven or eight Companies of Players in the Town together, who each of them did their utmost Endeavours to get the Audiences from the rest, and consequently that our Author was perpetually call'd upon, by those who had the Direction and Management of the Company to which he belong'd, for new Pieces which might be able to support them, and give them some Advantage over the rest. And 'tis easy to judge what time he was Master of, between his laborious Employment of Acting, and his continual Hurry of Writing. As for Friends, they whom in all likelihood *Shakespeare* consulted most, were two or three of his Fellow-Actors, because they had the Care of publishing his Works committed to them. Now they, as we are told by *Ben Johnson* in his Discoveries were extremely pleas'd with their Friend for scarce ever making a Blot; and were very angry with *Ben*, for saying he wish'd that he had made a thousand. The Misfortune of it is, that *Horace* was perfectly of *Ben's* mind.

— Vos O,
*Pompilius sanguis, carmen reprehendite, quod non
 Multa dies, & multa litura coercuit, atq;
 Præsectum decies non castigavit ad unguem.*

And so was my Lord *Roscommon*.

Poets

*Poets lose half the Praise they should have got,
Could it be known what they discreetly blot.*

These Friends then of *Shakespear* were not qualify'd to advise him. As for *Ben Johnson*, besides that *Shakespear* began to know him late, and that *Ben* was not the most communicative Person in the World of the Secrets of his Art; he seems to me to have had no right Notion of Tragedy. Nay, so far from it, that he who was indeed a very great Man, and who has writ Comedies, by which he has born away the Prize of Comedy both from Ancients and Moderns, and been an Honour to *Great Britain*; and who has done this without any Rules to guide him, except what his own incomparable Talent dictated to him; This extraordinary Man has err'd so grossly in Tragedy, of which there were not only stated Rules, but Rules which he himself had often read, and had even translated, that he has chosen two Subjects, which according to those very Rules, were utterly incapable of exciting either Compassion or Terror for the principal Characters, which yet are the chief Passions that a Tragick Poet ought to endeavour to excite. So that *Shakespear* having neither had Time to correct, nor

D

Friends

Friends to consult, must necessarily have frequently left such faults in his Writings, for the Correction of which either a great deal of Time or a judicious and a well natur'd Friend is indispensably necessary.

Vir bonus & prudens versus reprehendet inertes,

Culpabit duros, incomptis allinet Atrum

Transverso calamo signum, ambitiosa recidet

Ornamenta, parum claris lucem dare coget,

Arguet ambigue dictum, metanda notabit.

There is more than one Example of every kind of these Faults in the Tragedies of *Shakespear*, and even in the *Coriolanus*. There are Lines that are utterly void of that celestial Fire, of which *Shakespear* is sometimes Master in so great a Degree. And consequently there are Lines that are stiff and forc'd, and harsh and unmusical, tho' *Shakespear* had naturally an admirable Ear for the Numbers. But no Man ever was very musical who did not write with Fire, and no Man can always write with Fire, unless he is so far Master of his Time, as to expect those Hours when his Spirits are warm and volatile. *Shakespear* must therefore sometimes have Lines which are neither strong nor graceful? For who
ever

ever had Force or Grace that had not Spirit? There are in his *Coriolanus* among a great many natural and admirable Beauties, three or four of those Ornaments which *Horace* would term ambitious; and which we in *English* are apt to call Fustian or Bombast. There are Lines in some Places which are very obscure, and whole Scenes which ought to be alter'd.

I have, Sir, employ'd some Time and Pains, and that little Judgment which I have acquir'd in these Matters by a long and a faithful reading both of Ancients and Moderns, in adding, retrenching and altering several Things in the *Coriolanus* of *Shakespeare*, but with what Success I must leave to be determin'd by you. I know very well that you will be surpriz'd to find, that after all that I have said in the former part of this Letter, against *Shakespeare's* introducing the Rabble into *Coriolanus*, I have not only retain'd in the second Act of the following Tragedy the Rabble which is in the Original, but deviated more from the *Roman* Customs than *Shakespeare* had done before me. I desire you to look upon it as a voluntary Fault and a Trespass against Conviction: 'Tis one of those Things which are *ad Populum Phalera*, and by no means inserted to please such Men as you.

D 2

Thus,

Thus, Sir, have I laid before you a short but impartial Account of the Beauties and Defects of *Shakespear*, with an Intention to make these Letters publick if they are approv'd by you ; to teach some People to distinguish between his Beauties and his Defects, that while they imitate the one, they may with Caution avoid the other [there being nothing of more dangerous Contagion to Writers, and especially to young ones than the Faults of great Masters] and while with *Milton* they applaud the great Qualities which *Shakespear* had by Nature, they may follow his wise Example, and form themselves as he assures us, that he himself did, upon the Rules and Writings of the Ancients.

Sir, if so candid and able a Judge as your self shall happen to approve of this Essay in the main, and to excuse and correct my Errors, that Indulgence and that Correction will not only encourage me to make these Letters publick, but will enable me to bear the Reproach of those, who would fix a Brand, even upon the justest Criticism, as the Effect of Envy and ill Nature ; as if there could possibly be any ill Nature in the doing Justice, or in the endeavouring to advance a very noble and a very useful Art, and consequently to prove beneficent to Mankind. As for those who may accuse
me

me of the want of a due Veneration for the Merit of an Author of so establish'd a Reputation as *Shakespear*, I shall beg leave to tell them, that they chuse the wrongest time that they could possibly take for such an Accusation as that. For I appeal to you, Sir, who shews most Veneration for the Memory of *Shakespear*, he (who loves and admires his Charms and makes of them one of his chief Delights, who sees him and reads him over and over and still remains unsatiated, and who mentions his Faults for no other Reason but to make his Excellency the more conspicuous, or he who pretending to be his blind Admirer, shews in Effect the utmost Contempt for him, preferring empty effeminate Sound to his solid Beauties and manly Graces, and deserting him every Night for an execrable *Italian* Ballad, so vile that a Boy who should write such lamentable Dogrel, would be turn'd out of *Westminster-School* for a desperate Blockhead, too stupid to be corrected and amended by the harshest Discipline of the Place. I am,

S I R,

Yours, &c

D 3

To

To the SPECTATOR upon his Paper on
the 16th of April.

YOU know, Mr. *Spectator*, that Esquire *Bickerstaff* attack'd the Sharpers with Success; but *Shadwell* is of Opinion that your Bully, with his Box and his false Dice is an honefter Fellow than the Rhetorical Author, who makes use of his Tropes and Figures which are his High and his Low-runners, to cheat us at once of our Money and of our Intellectuals.

I would not have you think, Mr. *Spectator*, that this Reflection is directed to you: 'Tis only intended against one or two of your Correspondents, and particularly the *Inns-of-Court*-man, who, as you told us in your Second Paper supplies you with most of your Criticism: who seems to me so little to understand the Province that he has undertaken, that you would do well to advise him to do by you as he has done by his Father, and make a Bargain in the gross with some honest Fellow to answer all your Occasions. Which wholesome Advice if he proves too obstinate or too proud to take; I am confident

dent at least that he is too gallant a Person to take it ill if once a Week or once a Fort-night I should shew so much Presumption as to cause a Writ of Error to be issued out to reverse his *Temple-Judgment*.

I cannot wonder that Criticism should degenerate so vilely at a time when Poetry and Acting are sunk so low. For as *Hobbes* has observ'd, that as often as Reason is against a Man, a Man will be against Reason; so as often as the Rules are against an Author, an Author will be against the Rules. Men first write foolish ridiculous Tragedies, which shock all the Rules of Reason and Philosophy, and then they make foolish extravagant Rules to fit those foolish Plays. 'Tis impossible that your Gentleman of the Inns-of-Court could have sent you so much wrong Sense as there is in your Paper of the 16th, if he had not formerly writ an absurd Tragedy. There are as many Bulls and Blunders, and Contradictions in it almost as there are Lines, and all deliver'd with that insolent and that blust'ring Air, which usually attends upon Error, and Delusion, while Truth, like the Deity that inspires it, comes calmly and without noise.

To set a few of his Errors in their proper Light, he tells us in the beginning of that Paper, *That the English Writers of*
D. 4 *Tragedy*

Tragedy are possess'd with a Notion, that when they represent a vertuous or innocent Person in Distress, they ought not to leave him 'till they have deliver'd him out of his Trouble, and made him triumph over his Enemies.

But, *Mr. Spectator*, is this peculiar to the *English* Writers of Tragedy? Have not the *French* Writers of Tragedy the same Notion? Does not *Racine* tell us, in the Preface to his *Iphigenia*, that it would have been horrible to have defil'd the Stage with the Murther of a Princess so virtuous and so lovely as was *Iphigenia*.

But your Correspondent goes on, *This Error*, says he, with an insolent and dogmatick Air, they have been led into by a ridiculous Doctrine in modern Criticism, that they are oblig'd to an equal Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, and an impartial Execution of poetical Justice.

But who were the first who establish'd this Rule he is not able to tell. I take it for granted, that a Man who is ingenuous enough to own his Ignorance, is willing to be instructed. Let me tell him then, that the first who establish'd this ridiculous Doctrine of modern Criticism, was a certain modern Critick, who liv'd above two thousand Years ago; and who tells us expressly in the thirteenth Chapter of his critical *Spectator*, which Pedants call his Poetick,
That

That since a Tragedy, to have all the Beauty of which it is capable, ought to be Implex and not Simple, (by the way, Mr. Spectator, you must bear with this critical Cant, as we do with your Speculations and Lucubrations) and ought to move Compassion and Terror, for we have already shewn that the exciting these Passions is the proper Effect of a tragical Imitation, it follows necessarily, that we must not choose a very good Man, to plunge him from a prosperous Condition into Adversity, for instead of moving Compassion and Terrour, that on the contrary would create Horrour, and be detested by all the World.

And does not the same deluded Philosopher tell us in the very same Chapter, that the Fable to which he gives the second Preference, is that which has a double Constitution, and which ends by a double Catastrophe; a Catastrophe favourable to the Good, and fatal to the Wicked. Is not here, Mr. Spectator, a very formal Recommendation of the impartial and exact Execution of poetical Justice? Thus *Aristotle* was the first who establish'd this ridiculous Doctrine of modern Criticism, but Mr. *Rymer* was the first who introduc'd it into our native Language; who notwithstanding the Rage of all the Poetasters of the Times, whom he has exasperated by opening the Eyes of the Blind that they
may

may see their Errors, will always pass with impartial Posterity for a most learned, a most judicious, and a most useful Critick. Now is not your Correspondent a profound and a learned Person? and ought he not to own himself oblig'd to me for this notable piece of Erudition?

But he goes on in his dictatorial way, *This Rule*, says he, *whoever establish'd it, has, I am sure, no Foundation in Nature, in Reason, and in the Practice of the Ancients.* But what will this dogmatick Person say now, when we shew him that this contemptible Doctrine of poetical Justice is not only founded in Reason and Nature, but is it self the Foundation of all the Rules, and ev'n of Tragedy itself? For what Tragedy can there be without a Fable? or what Fable without a Moral? or what Moral without poetical Justice? What Moral, where the Good and the Bad are confounded by Destiny, and perish alike promiscuously. Thus we see this Doctrine of poetical Justice is more founded in Reason and Nature than all the rest of the poetical Rules together. For what can be more natural, and more highly reasonable, than to employ that Rule in Tragedy, without which that Poem cannot exist? Well! but the Practice of the Ancients is against this poetical Justice! What always, Mr. Spectator!

will

will your Correspondent have the Assurance to affirm that? No, but sometimes: Why then sometimes the Ancients offended against Reason and Nature. And who ever believ'd that the Ancients were without Fault, or brought Tragedy to its Perfection. But I shall take another Opportunity to shew that the Practice of the Ancients, in all their Master-pieces, is exactly according to this fundamental Rule. I have not time to do that in this short Letter, because that would necessarily oblige me to shew that poetical Justice is of a much larger Extent than this profound Critick imagines; but yet I shall give the discerning Reader a hint of it in that which follows.

Poetical Justice, says your Correspondent, *has no Foundation in Nature and Reason, because we find that good and evil happen alike to all Men on this side the Grave.* In answer to which he must give me leave to tell him, that this is not only a very false but a very dangerous Assertion; that we neither know what Men really are, nor what they really suffer.

'Tis not always that we know Men's Crimes, but how seldom do we know their Passions, and especially their darling Passions? And as Passion is the Occasion of infinitely more Disorder in the World than Malice, [for where one Man falls a Sacrifice to inveterate Malice
a thou-

a thousand become Victims to Revenge and Ambition; and whereas Malice has something that shocks human Nature, Passion is pleasingly catching and contagious.] Can any thing be more just, than that that Providence which governs the World should punish Men for indulging their Passions, as much as for obeying the Dictates of their most envenom'd Hatred and Malice?

Thus you see, for ought we know, Good and Evil does not happen alike to all Men on this side the Grave. Because 'tis for the most part, by their Passions, that Men offend; and 'tis by their Passions, for the most part, that they are punish'd. But this is certain, that the more Virtue a Man has the more he commands his Passions; but the Virtuous alone command them. The Wicked take the utmost Care to dissemble and conceal them; for which reason we neither know what our Neighbours are, nor what they really suffer. Man is too finite, too shallow, and too empty a Creature to know another Man thoroughly, to know the Creature of an infinite Creator; but dramatical Persons are Creatures of which a Poet is himself the Creator. And tho' a Mortal is not able to know the Almighty's Creatures, he may be allow'd to know his own; to know the utmost Extent of their Guilt, and what they ought to suffer;

fer; nay, he must be allow'd not only to know this himself, but to make it manifest and unquestionable to all his Readers and Hearers. The Creatures of a poetical Creator have no Diffimulation and no Reserve. We see their Passions in all their height, and in all their Deformity; and when they are unfortunate, we are never to seek for the Cause.

But suppose I should grant that there is not always an equal Distribution of Affliction and Happiness here below. Man is a Creature who was created immortal, and a Creature consequently that will find a Compensation in Futurity for any seeming Inequality in his Dealing here. But the Creatures of a poetical Creator are imaginary and transitory; they have no longer Duration than the Representation of their respective Fables; and consequently, if they offend, they must be punish'd during that Representation. And therefore we are very far from pretending that poetical Justice is an equal Representation of the Justice of the Almighty.

We freely confess that 'tis but a very narrow and a very imperfect Type of it; so very narrow, and so very imperfect, that 'tis forc'd by temporal to represent eternal Punishments; and therefore when we shew a Man unfortunate in Tragedy, for
not

not restraining his Passions; we mean that every one will for such Neglect, unless he timely repents, be infallibly punish'd by infinite Justice either here or hereafter.

If upon this foot we examine the Tragedies of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, we shall find that in their most beautiful Pieces, they are impartial Executors of Poetick Justice. And 'tis upon this foot that *Aristotle* requires that we should examine them. Your Correspondent I must confess is in the right when he says that that Philosopher declares for Tragedies, whose Catastrophes are unhappy with relation to the principal Characters. But then what Instructions does he give us for the forming those principal Characters? We are neither to make them very vertuous Persons on the one side, that is Persons who absolutely command their Passions, nor on the other side Villains who are actuated by inveterate Malice, but something between these two, that is to say Persons who neglecting their Passions suffer them to grow outrageous, and to hurry them to Actions which they would otherwise abhor. And that Philosopher expressly declares as we have shewn above, that to make a vertuous Man unhappy, that is a Man who absolutely commands his Passions, would create Horror instead of Compassion, and would be detested by all
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the World. And thus we have shewn that *Aristotle* is for Poetical Justice, notwithstanding that he is for unhappy Catastrophes: And so one would think was your Correspondent. For when he enumerates and commends some *English* Tragedies, which have unfortunate Catastrophes; there are not two of those which he commends, whose principal Characters can be said to be innocent, and consequently there are not two of them where there is not a due Observance of poetical Justice.

Thus, Mr. *Spectator*, I have discussed the Business of poetical Justice, and shewn it to be the Foundation of all Tragedy; and therefore whatever Persons, whether ancient or modern, have writ Dialogues which they call Tragedies, where this Justice is not observ'd, those Persons have entertain'd and amus'd the World with romantick lamentable Tales, instead of just Tragedies, and of lawful Fables.

'Tis not my Business at present to take any farther notice of the Errors of your Correspondent; perhaps I no more approve of Tragi-Comedies, or Tragedies with double Plots, than he does; but I hope he will not take it ill if I put him in mind that several of the Plays which he recommended before are Tragi-Comedies, and that most of them
have

have double Plots. But he is vilely mistaken if he thinks that Tragi-Comedy is of the Growth of our *English* Theatres.

I shall take another Opportunity to shew him that he is as much mistaken in what he has said of Humours, as in what he dictates concerning poetical Justice.

I am

Your very humble

LETTER

LETTER to the SPECTATOR upon his
Paper on the 24th of April.

SIR,

I Have read over your Paper of the 24th with a great deal of Satisfaction, and here return you my Acknowledgments for the Honour you have done me in quoting two of my Verses with Applause. I think my self oblig'd in Gratitude, my worthy Friend, to do as much Honour to your Judgment as you have done to my Imagination; and as you have the Goodness to allow me to be an humorous Poet, I am bound in Justice to celebrate you for a wonderful Critick; and to make it appear that contrary to the Observation of the Author of a late Rhapsody, one who has shewn himself no great Poet may be a prodigious Judge. Indeed the Observation of that Author is so far from being true, that most of the Criticks Ancient and Modern have been no Poets, and most of the Poets Ancient and Modern have been no Criticks. I cannot find out that any but *Homer*, and *Virgil*, and *Horace*, and *Sophocles*, and *Euripides* among the Ancients were

E

great

great Criticks. For who can believe that has read them, that *Apollonius Rhodius*, *Nonnus*, *Lucan*, *Statius*, and *Silius Italicus* ever so much as heard that Nature, and the Philosophers her Interpreters and Commentators had laid down Rules for an Epick Poem? And who that has read the Moderns could imagine, that most of their Dramatick Poets, had ever so much as heard that there were such things as the Rules. As *Boileau* has observ'd of the *French*, that some Persons among them had distinguish'd themselves by their Rhimes, who never knew how to distinguish *Lucan* from *Virgil*; so some among our own Rhimers have been renown'd for versifying, who never so much as knew that *Horace* and *Milton* were good Poets. And I can on the other side name several who never distinguished themselves by Poetry, who yet have oblig'd the World with Criticisms which have been Non-pareillo's, and the very Top-Critick of all those Criticks is my worthy Friend the *Spectator*.

Tho' who the Devil could have ever expected to have found my worthy Friend a Critick, after he had treated Criticks with so much Contempt in two or three of his Immortal *Tatlers*, and particularly in the 29th and the 246th, where they are pronounc'd to be the silliest of Mortals,
Creatures,

Creatures, forsooth, who profess Judgment; tho' by the way, Mr *Spectator*, he who professes or practises Poetry, and does not profess Judgment in it, professes himself an Ass. It was from those *Tatlers* and one or two more, Mr. *Spectator*, that I guess'd that you had a mortal Aversion to Criticism; but now I find plainly that they were none of your own, but were sent you by two or three damn'd Poets, who are a sort of Offenders that have not half the Charity which other Malefactors are wont to shew, but bear eternal Malice to their Executioners.

Thus the *Invectives* against Criticks and Criticism were other Peoples; you were too wise to write any such thing, as knowing that Taste which declines so fast is only to be restor'd and maintain'd by Criticism. And therefore instead of writing *Invectives* against it, you have oblig'd the World with the thing it self, with Criticism upon Criticism, and such Criticism. — As those *Tatlers* were the Off-spring of some certain Poets, which is manifest by their insipid Satyr, like the faint Eagerness of Vinegar decay'd: nothing is more clear than that the Criticisms could be none but yours. For as you may discover *ex ungue Leonem, & ex pede Hercule*, so in this Case the prodigious Off-spring speaks and confesses the Gigantick Father.

In your very Folio of the 24th of *April*, how have you shewn the Fines of your Discernment, and the Profundity of your Penetration, by your Encomium of two Verses of my Translation of the Fourth Satyr of *Boileau*? 'Tis now thirty Years since I translated that Satyr, and consequently was a very Boy at the Time of that Translation; yet from that Time to this the stupid Age has been ignorant of the Beauty of that Couplet. How very flegmatick a Wretch have I been, and how illegitimate an Offspring of Mr. *Bays*, not to know any thing of my own Excellence till I heard of it from you?

How little did I imagine when I translated that Couplet, that the great Critick was then in Embrio who thirty Years afterwards should declare it to be a charming Couplet, by giving it a place in his never dying Speculations.

I am perfectly convince'd, my most worthy and most ingenious Friend, that we Authors are as blind and as partial Judges of our own Works, as we are unrighteous ones of other Peoples. I was apt to imagine, before I submitted my own Opinion to the decisive Authority of your Judgment; that you would have done more for the Credit of my Genius and of your own Discernment,
by

by commending the following Verses of the Fourth Book of the Poem upon the Battel of *Ramelies*, when you had so fair an occasion of taking notice of them, as you had at the writing the 56th *Tatler*. If I begin the Verses a little higher than the couching of the Cataracts which is the Subject of the 56th *Tatler*, I am confident you will have the Goodness to pardon me, and the rather because you discover'd more than a common Satisfaction when you were present with your Friend Mr. A. at the reading those Verses in Manuscript. A celestial Spirit visits the Duke of *Marlborough* in a Vision the Night before the Battel of *Ramelies*, and after he has said several other things to him goes on thus.

*A wondrous Victory attends thy Arms,
Great in it self, and in its sequel vast;
Whose ecchoing Sound thro' all the West shall
run*

*Transporting the glad Nations all around,
Who oft shall doubt, and oft suspend their Joy,
And oft imagine all an empty Dream;
The Conqueror himself shall cry amaz'd,
'Tis not our Work, alas we did it not,
The Hand of God, the Hand of God is here,
For thee, so great shall be thy high Renown
That Fame shall think no Musick like thy Name;
Around the circling Globe it shall be spread,*

*And to the World's last Ages shall endure ;
 And the most lofty, most aspiring Man,
 Shall want th' Assurance in his secret Prayers
 To ask such high Felicity and Fame,
 As Heav'n has freely granted thee ; yet this
 That seems so great, so glorious to thee now,
 Would look how low, how vile to thy great
 Mind,*

*If I could set before thy astonish'd Eyes,
 Th' Excess of Glory, and th' Excess of Bliss,
 That is prepar'd for thy expiring Soul
 When thou arriv'st at everlasting Day.
 O could embodied Mind but comprehend
 The Glories of the Intellectual World,
 Or I the blissful Secret were allow'd,
 But Fate forbids, to Mortals to reveal :
 O I could lay a Scene before thy Eyes
 Which would distract thee with transporting
 Joy,*

*Fire the rich Blood in thy illustrious Veins,
 Make ev'ry Nerve with fierce Convulsions
 start,
 Blast all thy Spirits and thy Life destroy ;
 Thou could'st not taste th' Extatick Bliss and
 live.*

*As one who has liv'd thirty tedious Years,
 And ever since his wretched Birth been dark ;
 His visual Orbs with cloudy Films o'ercast,
 And in the Dungeon of the Body dwelt
 In utter Ignorance of Nature's Works*

And

*And Wonders of this vast material World,
 And has no Notion e'er conceiv'd of Light
 Or Colours, or the verdant flowry Earth,
 Or the stupendous Prospect of the Sky;
 If then he finds some Artist whose nice Hand
 Couches the Cataracts and clears his Eyes,
 And all at once a Flood of glorious Light,
 And this bright Temple of the Universe,
 The crystal Firmament, the blazing Sun,
 All the amazing Glories of the Heav'ns,
 All the Great Maker's high Magnificence
 Come rushing thro' his Eyes upon his Soul;
 He cannot bear th'astonishing Delight,
 But starts, exclaims, and stamps and raves,
 and dies :*

*So the vast Glories of the upper World
 If they were set before embodied Mind
 Would oppress Nature and extinguish Life.*

These are the Verses, my most discerning Friend, that I thought might have been preferred to the foremention'd Couplet, especially since they would as it were have introduced themselves, whereas the Couplet is dragg'd in by extreme Violence. But I submit to your infallible Judgment, not in the least suspecting that my worthy Friend can have any Malice in this Affair, and insert that Couplet in his immortal Speculations only on purpose to expose me; no, far be it

from me to entertain any such Jealousy of my dearest Friend, who is so good, so kind, so beneficent, and who has so often given himself the glorious Title of the Lover and Benefactor of Mankind. Who could imagine that one who hath given himself that glorious Appellation, could e'er be prompted by Malice or Passion, or Interest thus slyly and hypocritically to abuse one whom he had call'd his Friend?

I have been apt to believe likewise, my worthy Friend, that you would have been kinder to your self and to me, if instead of commending the foremention'd Couplet you had taken some notice of the following Verses which are in my Paraphrase upon the *Te Deum* ; especially when you had so fair an occasion to mention them as you had at the writing the 119th *Tatler*. The Couplet of the translated Satyr was introduced by Violence. But how very naturally would the following Verses of the Paraphrase, have been mention'd either before or after the last Paragraph of the foremention'd Paper, where a Spirit is introduc'd, who after he has spoke of that part of the Creation which is too little for human Sight, comes afterwards to speak of the immense Objects of Nature after this manner.

I must

I must acknowledge for my own part, that altho' it is with much Delight that I see the Traces of Providence in these Instances, I still see greater pleasure in considering the Works of the Creation in their Immensity, than in their Minuteness. For this Reason, I rejoice when I strengthen my sight so as to make it pierce into the most remote Spaces, and take a view of those Heavenly Bodies, which lie out of the reach of Human Eyes tho' assisted by Telescopes; what you look upon as one confus'd White in the milky way, appears to me a long Tract of Heav'ns, distinguish'd by Stars, that are ranged in proper Figures and Constellations: while you are admiring the Sky in a starry Night, I am entertain'd with a variety of Worlds and Suns plac'd one above another, and rising up to such an immense Distance that no created Eye can see an end of them.

Upon the writing this Paragraph, how could you avoid the making mention of Verses which had the very same Ideas, and Verses which you had formerly mention'd with Applause in private Conversation? I know you will answer that you had entirely forgot them, and therefore I take the liberty here to refresh your Memory. The Angels are introduc'd in that Paraphrase speaking to
 God,

God, and saying after other things that which follows.

*Where-e'er at utmost stretch we cast our Eyes,
Thro' the vast frightful Spaces of the Skies;
Ev'n there we find thy Glory, there we gaze
On thy bright Majesty's unbounded Blaze;
Ten thousand Suns, prodigious Globes of Light
At once in broad Dimensions strike our sight;
Millions behind in the remoter Skies,
Appear but Spangles to our wearied Eyes;
And when our wearied Eyes want farther
strength*

*To pierce the Void's immeasurable Length,
Our vigorous tow'ring Thoughts still farther fly,
And still remoter flaming Worlds descry;
But ev'n an Angels comprehensive Thought
Cannot extend so far as thou hast wrought,
Our vast Conceptions are by swelling brought,
Swallow'd and lost in Infinite to nought.*

How glad am I that the foremention'd Verses were writ before the above-nam'd *Tatlers*? Otherwise I should have been thought to have borrow'd from my worthy Friend, without making any manner of acknowledgment, only adding or endeavouring to add to what I borrow'd a little of that Spirit, and Elevation and Magnificence of Expression which the Greatness of the Hints requir'd.

'Tis

'Tis for this Reason that I am glad the Verses were printed some Years before the Prose. For you know, my dear Friend, that a Plagiary in general is but a scandalous Creature, a sort of a spiritual Outlaw, and ought to be treated as such by all the Members of the Commonwealth of Learning. But a Plagiary from living Authors is most profligately impudent, and in so slow and splenatick a Nation as ours most unjust and barbarous. For among us any thing that is admirably good is twenty or thirty Years before it comes to be understood. And how infinitely base is it in the mean while to deprive an Author of any thing that is valuable in him, and to intercept his coming Praise. As Laws are made for the Security of Property, what pity 'tis that there are not some enacted for the Security of a Man's Thoughts and Inventions, which alone are properly his. For Land is alienable and Treasure is transitory, and both must at one time or other pass, either by his own voluntary Act, or by the Violence and Injustice of others, or at least by Fate. And therefore nothing is truly and really a Man's own.

— *Puncto quod mobilis Hora*

Nunc prece, nunc precio, nunc vi, nunc sorte supremâ

Permutet Dominos, & cedat in altera Jura.

'Tis

'Tis only a Man's Thoughts and Inventions that are properly his: being alone Things that can never be alienated from him, neither by Force nor Persuasion, nor by Fate it self; and tho' another may basely usurp the Honour of them, yet they must for ever rightfully belong to their first Inventor. Thus even the richest and the happiest of Men have nothing that is truly and really their own but their Thoughts and Inventions. But Authors for the most part, and especially Poets have nothing that can so much as be call'd their own but their Thoughts. 'Tis for those alone, and the Glory which they expect from those that they entirely quit their Pretensions to Riches, and renounce the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World; and therefore to endeavour to deprive them of those is exceedingly inhuman. What a Joy 'tis to think that the Precedence of Times sets me free from the Imputation of this Injustice? Had I been capable of doing this, and doing it to my worthy Friend, of wronging my dearest Friend in this manner, who knows how far that Barbarity might have extended it self; I might have proceeded to have upbraided him with some weak place in his never-dying Folio's; and having forcibly depriv'd him of his Silver and his Gold, have pelted him with his Brass and his Copper out of counterfeit Anger

Anger or pretended Scorn, because they were of no richer Metal.

But the Case of my dear Friend is vastly different. You have that Reputation, and the World has that Opinion of your Merit, that they will be so far from believing that you have Obligations to a living Author which you have not, that tho' you had really made thus bold with me, it would have been impossible to have convinc'd above forty or fifty People of it. And here, my dear Friend, at the same time that I acknowledge your uncommon Merit, I cannot but congratulate your incomparable Felicity, It being plain that you have got more Reputation in three Years time than *Milton* has done in fifty Years, or than *Shakespeare* has in an hundred. I shall therefore judiciously conclude with the generality of your Readers, that you have a Merit paramount to that of all *British* Authors both living and dead, and that you have not only more Merit than any one Moralist either Ancient or Modern, but that if you continue your Paper Three Years longer, you will have as much Merit as they have all together. I am,

My dear Friend,

With great Respect and Fidelity,

Your, &c

March

March the 7th, 17¹⁸.

Mr. Spectator,

YOU tell us in your Fourth Paper, that you know Peoples Thoughts by their Eyes. How apt we are all to imagine fine Things of our selves! especially we Authors, *Mr. Spectator*. There was a certain Friend of mine, a Squire lately defunct, who made the very same boast that you do; and yet he recommended a Pettifogger to me for an honest Fellow, who diving into my Secrets, betray'd me to those very People with whom he pretended to serve me; a Pettifogger thro' whose Eyes, even I and several others who pretend to none of my Friend the Squire's Profundity, can discern the working of his mischievous Thoughts, as plainly as I can see the Operations of Bees thro' a Crystal Hive.

As soon, *Mr. Spectator*, as I found my self betray'd, I began to enquire into this Fellow's Character, tho' if you were to look between his two Eyes, you wou'd swear there was no occasion for it. For, *Mr. Spectator*, he tells you what he is, when he only looks on you; and uniting in his pettifogging Person both your noble Attributes, is at one and

and the same time *Tatler* and *Spectator*. In short, tho' he is an errant Traytor in his Heart, his Face is a plain Dealer, and lets you immediately without Ceremony and without Reserve into the inmost Secrets of his Soul.

Upon Enquiry I found his Character to be as extraordinary as his Person. He is by Politicks a *Jacobite*, by Moral Principle a Setter and a Betrayer, by Religion a Quaker, an utter Foe to all Civil and Religious Ceremony, unless it be drinking the Pretender's Health on his Knees, to whom alone of the Race of Men he has been true and faithful: By this one may guess that his Education has been very extraordinary. I find upon the most curious Enquiry that I have been able to make, that the only Schools that ever he has been at have been spunging Houses and County-Gaols; and that his two Universities have been the *Fleet* and the *Queen's-Bench*.

I hope, Mr. *Spectator*, that this Letter may afford you a Hint, for a Lucubration, or a Speculation, or whatever other learned Term you may be pleas'd to give it; which by discovering to your Readers the Error and the Frailty of the Squire lately defunct, may convince them how little we know even those with whom we daily converse. Alas our Judgments of one another are empty
and

and superficial, and either built upon vain Appearances, or the Reports of those, who neither truly know us, nor speak what they really think of us, but often traduce us, and misrepresent us, in order to comfort or vindicate, or to support themselves.

But of all Mankind there are none who know the rest of Men so little as the generality of your Authors ; for this Pettifogger was so foolish a Rogue, that any one might see thro' him at first sight. And yet my Friend the Squire was stark blind to him : By the way, you may know that my Friend the Squire was an Author, as celebrated an Author as you are, Mr. *Spectator*, a Penny-Folio Author. He got some Reputation by his *Lucubrations* ; but had the Fault of most Authors who have more Imagination than Judgment, he could not leave off when he was well ; not considering, Mr. *Spectator*, that had honest Sir *Martin* left off in time, his Mistress had never made the Discovery that *Warner* play'd and sung for him. I am

Your, &c.

To

*To the SPECTATOR.**Mr. Spectator,*

I Have a short Case of Conscience to put to you; to You who have establish'd your self in the Office of *Director Dubitantium* general. About *January* last I happen'd to have an Obligation to a certain Author, an Obligation that repos'd a Trust in me which I have since discharg'd. Being pleas'd with the Frankness of this Author's doing this, I resolv'd upon reading his celebrated Penny-Folio's, I mean upon reading them in order. For till then, I had read but here and there one, and none at all of the first two Months. The first thing that I observ'd in them was, that I was endeavour'd to be expos'd and calumniated clandestinely and perfidiously by one who at the same time caress'd me where-e'er he saw me, and call'd himself my Friend, and all this only to serve a poor pitiful Turn, which was to establish the Opera at the Expence of Dramatick Poetry; I say of Dramatick Poetry, *Mr. Spectator*, if it had not been for which, that Author had long since been in the Dust. The *Quere* is, whether the foresaid Obligation ought to debar me of the Right of vindicating the Truth and my self. It was not long after this, *Mr. Spectator*, that

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the abovesaid Author repented him so far of the Obligation he had laid on me, that he insulted and affronted me several times most barbarously by a Wretch so despicable and so impotent, that it would have been Cowardice to have beat him; a Wretch whose Character will come enclos'd to you in the same Cover with this; and not content with that, endeavour'd once more to expose me in his Quotidian Folio's. The second *Quere* is, Mr. *Spectator*, whether I am not free, now I am got quit of the Obligation which was laid upon me, tho' it had been far greater than it was, to shew my just Resentment, which I am about to do by publishing three or four modest Letters which I have pick'd and cull'd from the numerous company of those which are more bitter, and which I resolve to suppress in order to shew that I have a Soul that is capable of remembring Obligations, as well as of revenging Injuries I impatiently expect your Decision in this matter! in the mean time it seems to me that common Sense obliges me to believe, that no Man can have an Obligation strong enough laid on him to make him pass by a Box on the Ear, or the being expos'd in Print, without returning each of th' Affronts in kind. I am

Oct. 23. 1711.

Your, &c.

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